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Les « grands territoires » au Moyen Âge, réalités et représentations

Le Roman de *Perceforest*

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Le Roman de Perceforest

The Roman de Perceforest – dauntingly long and richly complex – has only recently begun to attract significant scholarly attention : thanks to the editorial work of Gilles Roussineau, more than half of this once largely inaccessible text is now available in modern critical edition. The work was long regarded as a product of the mid fourteenth century, due to the narrator's claim to be working on behalf of Count Guillaume I of Hainaut, but was also understood as having been revived and reworked at the fifteenth-century Burgundian court. Recent scholarship, however, has lent considerable weight to the possibility that the text may actually have been composed at the court of Philip the Good¹. In any case, this vast narrative, chronicling several generations in a fictional pre-Arthurian Britain, is a masterpiece of late medieval literature, one whose resources we are only beginning to tap. In imagining the pre-Christian foundations for the Grail cycle and the political and cultural forces that worked to make Britain an environment in which the Arthurian world could unfold, Perceforest offers a fascinating window onto late medieval reading of both romance and historiography. Christine Ferlampin-Acher's article traces the motif of blood throughout Perceforest, uncovering a network of literary, cultural, and spiritual associations that shed light both on the text's relevance for a fifteenth-century Burgundian audience, and on its reworking of motifs associated with the Holy Grail. Miranda Griffin examines ways that Perceforest treats the concept of origins – personal, cultural, literary – and in particular the importance of the animal world as a kind of reservoir out of which human customs and identities can be constructed. Brooke Findley studies the complex interaction of nature and culture in Perceforest as forces that combine to create a sense of place, and thus to shape – and be shaped by – constructions of individual identity.

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¹ For a review of previous attempts to date Perceforest and a detailed argument in favour of fifteenth-century composition, see Christine Ferlampin-Acher, *Perceforest et Zéphir : Propositions autour d'un récit arthurien bourguignon*, Genève, 2010, Publications Romanes et Françaises 251, especially p. 15-86.